



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## ACADEMIC UNREST AND COLLEGE CONTROL

By Professor J. J. STEVENSON

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

GREAT unrest exists, for many reasons, in academic circles, but the most disturbing protests are against efforts to control expression of opinion by college professors, which are denounced as not merely infringements upon the right of free speech, but also as attacks upon "academic freedom," certain to bring about disaster in the near future. The general unrest may be regarded by some persons as manifestations of the growing unwillingness to endure restraint of any kind; yet one must not dismiss it as simply a phase of the anarchistic tendency in all classes of society; the matter is of vital importance; it involves complex problems, affecting the usefulness of our colleges and secondary schools.

A man, sole occupant of a far-off island, is untrammelled save by physical conditions; but in a community no such freedom can exist. Each man has rights, but, in exercising them, he must not interfere with the rights of other men. This law is recognized as obligatory especially upon men in responsible positions, who, in the nature of the case, may not do many things, which an ordinary citizen may do. They have consented to curtailment of freedom because they prefer honor or emolument. When a man becomes employee of any type, be he bank president or sorter of rags on a dump, he voluntarily deprives himself of rights that he may gain something more to be desired. This is equally true of professional men, since they, in some sense, are employees. They make the surrender without compulsion; no man is compelled to become clergyman, physician, teacher or lawyer. He is untrammelled in choice; the world is wide and he may gain a livelihood in any one of many directions.

But there have always been college teachers who refuse to concede that they have renounced the exercise of any personal rights; men, whose acts assert the conviction that a college appointment confers the right to be a free lance in discussions relating to morals, social matters, politics or religion. Yet no one has suggested that such appointment endows a man with omniscience or even with ordinary common sense. But col-

leges are under bonds, which must be kept in mind not only by the trustees, but also by all employees, from the president, down or up. Gifts, usually more or less conditional, have been received from donors and similar gifts are sought from others. The greater part of the older colleges were founded as denominational schools or in close relations with a group of religious bodies. The usefulness of a college is dependent on the goodwill and confidence of the community, which is apt to be conservative in educational matters—for, however radical in opinion the ordinarily intelligent man may be, he rarely desires to have his children begin where he expects to end. As holders of trust funds and as responsible for training of youth, trustees of colleges are under obligations, which honorable men can not ignore—and those who seek appointment as college teachers should bear this in mind. Reference to such permanent obligations seems to give pain to some advocates of “academic freedom,” as savoring of vulgar “commercialism” and as unworthy of consideration by dwellers in an intellectual atmosphere. But commonplace honesty ought to be at least as important in the conduct of college affairs as in ordinary life.

“Independent thinking” does not mean advance or originality in thought; it may be only erratic thinking. Opposition to prevailing opinions is no proof that the man is a “reformer”; his sincerity in independent thinking has nothing to do with the matter. He may be convinced that marriage is merely a survival of property rights; that a trade unionist, punished for dynamiting houses and imperiling lives, is a martyr in behalf of human rights; that ownership of land is positive proof of crime in the past or present; that the whole organization of society is based on injustice by the few; that the only hope for this world is overthrow of all conditions now regarded as normal; but this sincerity gives him no right to demand that the college retain him and pay a salary that he may conduct a propaganda, at its expense, inside or outside of the classroom.

But there are matters which too rarely are considered carefully. Colleges do not exist in order to petrify intellectual conditions, or to prevent increase of knowledge; no sane man would maintain that restrictions should be placed on investigation, for such procedure would be disastrous. A teacher, who is not a genuine investigator, becomes a mere lesson-hearer, a purveyor of second-hand opinions, as expressed in the text-book. To be efficient in the classroom, one must be a coherent thinker; but that mode of thinking becomes confirmed only after patient search for the truth, diligent comparison of arguments on both

sides of the questions involved. This type of work should be done without consideration of possible results, as truth alone is the object sought. When the writer entered college, more than sixty years ago, the respectable community knew that scientific man and infidel were practically synonymous terms—astronomers alone being possible exceptions. But chemists, physicists, geologists and naturalists held close to their work; their discoveries came in quick succession and, in great part, were accepted as genuine. The world soon recognized that the prevalent conception respecting scientific men was born not of knowledge, but of prejudice, that it was merely an echo of the metaphysicist's dictum, that study of material things unfits a man for contemplation of spiritual things. This was the outcome of untiring, patient investigation, of which the results were published, with rare exceptions, in a judicial manner, without reference to misrepresentation by opponents. Such work must be encouraged not only in natural science, but also along other lines of study. There are problems in psychology, economics and sociology, which are perplexing to the last degree, as the facts are obtainable only with difficulty and the evidence is apparently conflicting. Here, however, the temptation to publish incomplete work is too great for men anxious for recognition by the reading part of the community. Startling hypotheses are apt to be published as if they were final results. Such hasty publication should be discouraged as emphatically as patient, judicial investigation should be encouraged. To determine the border line between investigation and mere compilation of so-called statistical facts is difficult—it is not easy to determine when veal becomes beef; but there must be a determining body.

Equally perplexing are questions relating to participation in political and religious discussions. The opinions now maintained by the writer are wholly different from those which he maintained twenty-five years ago, the change being due as much to actual experience as to wide observation. It is not wise for college professors to take active part in such discussions; their calling unfits them.

In the class room, they are regarded by students as practically infallible and, in time, they are apt to become convinced that the students are correct in their estimate. Too often the nature of their studies renders them self-centered and, except in a few departments, they are not brought into such contact with the business world as could satisfy them that they are not a superior race. This positiveness is only too manifest in the

cases where intellectual force or the exigencies of conflicting elements have put them into prominent places, for there they exhibit a strange indifference to public opinion. It would be well if professors abstained from active participation in public affairs and devoted their energies to work in their special departments. But such limitations should apply equally to all members of the staff; the president should not be permitted to be *Oliver Twist* for one political party, unless a professor be permitted to be the *Oliver Twist* for an opposing party, if he so desire. The chief objection to prominence of this kind is that it is due to the prestige of the college and in very small part to the man's ability. The respectability of the college is capitalized to cover defects of the machine-managers. Usually, the innate sense of propriety determines well the extent to which one may go, but, certainly, there have been, as there will be, occasions when college authorities must decide whether or not they will permit expenditure of college funds to aid a man's efforts to gain prominence in church or in state.

It is well to note the strange tendency to ignore the fact that, speaking legally, all persons receiving salary from a corporation are employees. This assertion has been resented bitterly by some writers, who hold that college teachers are appointees, not employees, and that the corporation, having confirmed an appointment, has no authority to remove the appointee. If such were the condition, the college trustees would do well to seek the heirs of donors and to return the gifts, as the trusts can not be fulfilled. But the claim is without basis. The argument that the President of the United States appoints justices of the Supreme Court but can not remove them is not accurate. The President nominates, but the Senate confirms or rejects. The Senate is the appointing authority, and it is the jury before which an impeached judge is tried. Similarly in a college, a committee or the president nominates candidates, but the trustees appoint or reject. No other condition is possible, as financial agreements must be made.

A notion seems to prevail among teachers that peculiar sacredness is attached to their profession. This perhaps is of medieval origin, for in most of Europe, teaching was one of the many duties required of clericals. In this country, the older colleges began as preparatory schools for the Christian ministry and were in charge of ministers. Perhaps, the wretched salaries paid to clergymen and college teachers are due to medieval conceptions, for clericals in the dominant church were celibates, supposed to need little of this world's comfort. But

there is nothing sacred about the profession of college teaching; no reason exists why an "appointment" should be so guarded as to render extremely difficult the removal of an incompetent or indifferent teacher. Professorships should not be havens of rest for the slothful or negligent. In other professions men must prove themselves competent or must fail.

While recognizing the right and the duty of trustees to remove slothful, incompetent or injurious professors, one must insist that there are cogent reasons why a certain degree of security must be assured to the professor; and these have been conceded in the better grade of colleges, so that one receiving a final appointment has a, so to say, civil service hold upon the position. Preparation is long and costly; the salary, at best, is meager; promotion is very slow; while a man's efficiency should increase as he grows older in the work. The honest worker must feel that, as long as he does his work faithfully, his position will be secure. The interests of colleges demand this security because the teaching staff is the essential portion; its members have been chosen to do the work for which the college exists. There have been comparatively few cases in which abrupt or unjust "removal for cause" has occurred, but, unfortunately, they are not unknown. Trustees are almost isolated from individual professors in our larger institutions and are liable to be influenced by opinions of an officer who, honest perhaps, is certainly human, and is not apt to love those who do not see eye to eye with him in matters of policy. Unquestionably, some recent events have led thoughtful men to feel that radical changes must be made, if proper working conditions are to continue.

The American college is a legal body authorized to conduct an educational work without pecuniary profit to the incorporators. The trustees are not expected to manage details of that work, though they are responsible for them as much as for the financial details. The corporation employs a number of supposedly qualified persons to care directly for the teaching, one being designated president. The college thus consists of trustees the faculty, with the students, who are raw material to be fashioned into finished product. A university differs from a college only in that it consists of several schools, each with its own faculty. All machinery necessary to effective working appears to be provided in this organization, but, naturally, some adjustments have to be made in most cases to secure smooth operation.

Originally, the trustees were intended to act as "nursing

fathers," guarding the orthodoxy of the professors, who were dependent on the fees for salary; if any deficit came, the faculty had to look after it. As a rule the trustees had great respect for the professors and cultivated their acquaintance assiduously. In later years, the great increase in property and the greater broadening in scope of work, with consequent enlargement of faculties, have made it almost impossible to maintain the intimacy formerly existing between trustees and professors; one is justified in saying that in some of the larger universities, there are trustees who can not tell the names of the oldest professors in the several faculties. No work can be conducted properly amid such conditions—a close personal bond must exist between trustees and professors. The faculty should have general control of educational affairs and the trustees should have general control of financial affairs. But there is a borderland where the duties overlap; it is necessary that the trustees consent to changes in curriculum and methods and, at times, the faculty must be consulted in reference to expenditures and buildings.

The president is supposed to be a bond, as he is usually a trustee; but, unfortunately, instead of bridging the gap, he is apt to convert it into a wide chasm, over which he may fly in a private aeroplane. Action by trustees has placed in his hands control of many matters, which should be delegated by them to no one. The self-perpetuating character of the board, so generally existing, makes possible for a shrewd man to fill vacancies with persons of his own choosing. In far too many instances, the president was not selected because of fitness to have oversight of the educational work; he is no bond between trustees and faculties and, under present conditions, he can not become one; everything tends to make him autocratic, as though the college were his personal property.

Each faculty in a university should be represented on the board of trustees by its dean, *ex officio* and without vote. This officer should not be selected by the trustees, but should be elected by the faculty in secret ballot, that he may be truly representative. This, however, is not sufficient, a closer bond is essential. A joint committee of trustees and professors should be chosen by each board for each school, two trustees and two professors, with the president as chairman, *ex officio*. All matters affecting any school should be referred to its committee, and no action should be taken by the trustees until after a report from the committee has been presented. Such an arrangement would bring trustees and professors into definite

relations, would prevent the former from becoming nominal and would increase the dignity of the office. Such committees exist in some universities, but they are not what they should be as, in most cases, the members are selected by the trustees, the faculty having no voice in the appointments.

These propositions are based on the assumption that trustees, president and professors are well qualified for their respective positions. Unfortunately, this assumption is not wholly correct. Reformation in college affairs must be begun by complete change in method of selecting men for appointment to the several offices. The writer desires to offer some suggestions.

The board of trustees is responsible not only for the financial affairs, but also for the teaching work, the latter being the business for which the corporation was formed. This combination of responsibilities calls for strong men, whose hearts are in the work. One might well imagine that a liberal proportion of professors should be in the board, as they understand the nature of the work, while their success in rearing families on small salaries proves no slight ability in finance. The writer knows of more than one instance, where a university was saved by the faculty, after a board of able lawyers, clergymen and business men had given up the attempt in despair. But this type of representation has never been tried in the United States, though it has been remarkably successful in Scotland. In this country the office of college trustee seems to be regarded generally as a post of honor not of responsibility. There may be no personal responsibility before the law, but for that reason the moral responsibility is greater. Eminence in professional life or success in business affairs is no evidence, in itself, of fitness; no more is possession of wealth or a reputation for generosity. Men chosen to trusteeship should be familiar with the nature and needs of college work and they should have time as well as will to serve the institution. No man with proper self-respect would consent to be a nominal trustee; he would not endeavor to shirk responsibility by transferring his duties to a president. Any trustee who has not time and inclination to do hard work should resign, that a proper man may have the place.

The office of college president, anomalous in many ways, was an outgrowth of rapid expansion after the Civil War. In earlier times, the president was the mouthpiece of the faculty, over which he presided. Now, however, he is the executive officer of the corporation, general manager of all operations, financial or otherwise and in many cases he is member of the



trustees. The crying need of every college is money and more money for "expansion" and for buildings; and the president is expected to find this money, as well as to advertise the college, so that the number of students may be increased and the need for still more money may be emphasized. The condition is bad; the duties are unrelated and should not be assigned to one man. The college or university president should be concerned chiefly with educational affairs, an *ex officio* member of each faculty and a genuine bond between them all. He should be chosen because of proved fitness to superintend the general internal affairs of a college; because of known probity in speech and action; and he should be a teacher earnestly in sympathy with the teacher and his work. Happily, there have been, as there are still, some presidents of this type, who care less for "expansion" than for honest work. Securing of money should be the task of a special officer.

Trustees and their duties are important, but professors and their duties are more important. If the faculty be incompetent, the college can not do the work for which it was founded, even though the lists of students increase greatly. No shoe factory could claim public respect and confidence if it merely succeed in foisting on the community a great quantity of inferior shoes, labeled as the best. The type of output is the test; if it is to be good, the workmen must be good and honest.

To secure proper men the college positions must be inviting; but they are not inviting to strong men. There is little pecuniary inducement; a life of leanness is the prospect. Formerly there were inducements for men who cared less for money than for opportunity to devote their lives to research. For such men, the long vacation and the few hours of teaching were all-important. But vacation and "literary leisure" no longer exist for the younger men in our great universities or for the greater proportion of the older men in the others. Summer schools increase the total roll of students and the fees received by teachers help to meet payments for the necessities of life. "Expansion" of course and multiplication of schools without multiplication of professors have increased the hours of teaching. Even in many of the larger institutions the hours of work are scattered throughout the day; too often, the intervening hours are occupied in committee work, for the machinery has become complicated. Vitality is sapped and little energy or will-power remains for genuine study. If a man persist in research, his associates may soon have opportunity to lament the untimely end of a promising investigator. Certainly, the

old-time inducements no longer exist, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure able, ambitious young men as teachers. If present conditions continue, our colleges will soon cease to be nurseries of science and literature.

The board of trustees ought not to choose men to serve as professors; ordinarily, its members are not familiar with the requirements and know little about the duties which a teacher must perform. Under present conditions, the president of a college or university should not be authorized to make selections or to present nominations. He has no time to investigate the claims of candidates and, in too many cases, he is not competent. No one would suggest that he select professors in law, medicine or finance, yet he is thought competent to choose college professors in arts and science, because he had taken a college course somewhere and perhaps had taught during a year or two in a secondary school, to secure means for a course in a professional school. His ideal of college work and his conception of successful work frequently differ greatly from those of the genuine teacher.

The primary selection of candidates should be made by a committee of professors in allied departments, aided, if possible, by competent men outside of the college. This committee should select two candidates to be recommended to the joint committee on the school concerned, by which a special investigation should be made and a choice made for nomination and confirmation by the board of trustees. A complicated process, one may say, but an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure, even in college circles. It is all-important to avoid saddling a college with hasty injudicious or not just men. A modification would be necessary in selection of assistants and instructors, but in no case should the decision be left to the caprice of one man.

The suggestions are: close contact of trustees and professors is essential; where several schools exist, an intimate bond should unite the faculties; trustees and professors should be selected most carefully; the work in each department should be supervised and all should know that a college is not an asylum for the indifferent, incompetent or slothful; a just salary should be paid and the importance of opportunity for study should be recognized; zeal for increased number of students should be discouraged and quality, not quantity, of the output should be the aim.